

Reward offered for cemetery vandals



Staff photo

Reward

A cash reward is being offered for information leading to the arrest of persons connected with the vandalism at Oakwood Cemetery on Thursday. More than 160 headstones were tipped from foundations, many were smashed and completely destroyed. Police estimate the damage between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

A Beloit businessman is offering a cash reward for information about last week's extensive vandalism at a local cemetery.

Danny Shear, president of Beloit Redi-Mix Inc., told the Daily News this morning he is offering a \$200 reward for information leading to the arrest of those involved. The Beloit Daily News will offer another \$200, Publisher Bill Behling said today.

Other businesses and individuals can pledge additional reward money by calling Gerry White at the First National Bank 364-4401.

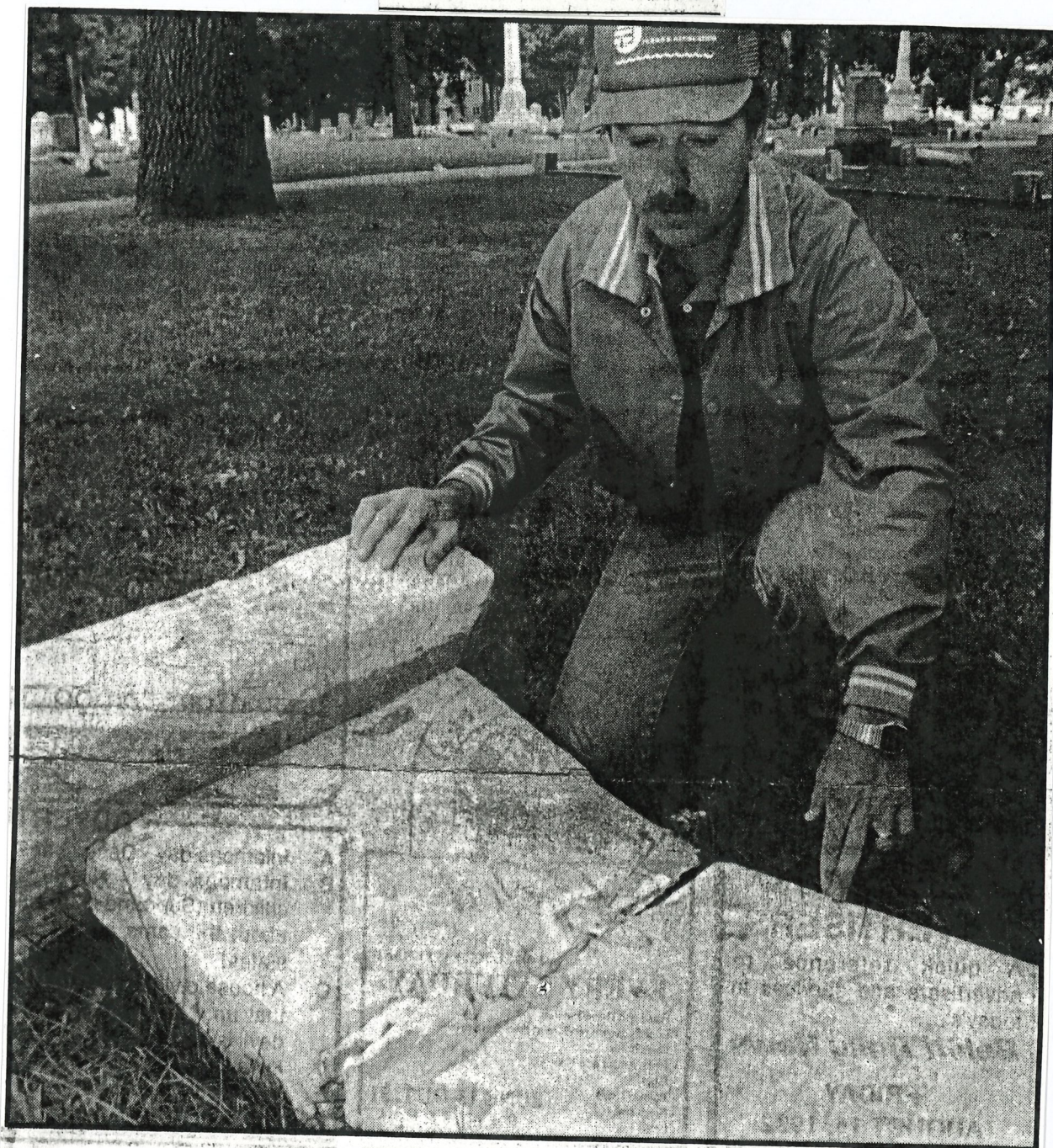
Last Thursday night vandals toppled and destroyed more than 160 grave monuments and headstones at Oakwood Cemetery. Many were well over 100 years old, making restoration to original condition virtually impossible.

Although the sentimental and historical loss is incalculable, the cost of repairing the damage could exceed \$30,000.

In addition to the reward established by Shear, Greater Beloit Area Crime Stoppers will pay up to \$1,000 to anonymous informants if their information leads to an arrest.

Anyone with information that could help identify the responsible parties (police think more than one vandal were involved) should call Crime Stoppers at 362-7463, or 36-CRIME.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14, 1992



Bob Carlson looks over one of the 160 damaged headstones at Oakwood Cemetery. Staff photo by J.B. Maloney

Vandalism costs top \$30,000; reward offered to spur leads

By Robert Baxter Jr.

Daily News staff writer

Cost estimates for repairing and resetting more than 160 damaged monuments and headstones at Oakwood Cemetery exceed \$30,000, Bob Carlson, superintendent of cemeteries in Beloit, said.

Today Carlson and his staff are still trying to put together the pieces of Beloit's history, which were found destroyed by vandals on July 31.

"Right now we're cataloging them, recording the broken monuments and stones," said Carlson. "With the older ones (some dating back to the mid-1800s), we're trying to search through the files and trace them back to the heirs of the owners of

the lots.

"In some situations, we simply won't be able to find the owners. At that point it will be up to my supervisors whether we fix or simply remove the stones."

Act of vandalism

On July 31, employees arrived at Oakwood Cemetery and found more than 160 grave monuments and headstones tipped over, uprooted and damaged. The damage apparently occurred late Thursday night or early Friday morning, police say.

Greater Beloit Area Crime Stoppers is offering up to \$1,000 cash reward for information leading to the arrest of those involved.

The Beloit Daily News, along with local businessman Troy Shear,

have chipped in \$200 each to build the reward fund. Some funeral homes also have added to the fund.

However, police say they have little information at this point.

More damage found

As Carlson and his employees have sifted through the ruins, more damage than first thought has been found.

"We have three different contractors we're pricing out here," said Carlson. "We'll try and reconstruct them, put them back together the way they were to maintain their historical authenticity."

"We're finding more than those that were actually tipped over. There are about 30 to 40 broken

Please see CEMETERY P. 2.

Cemetery

and a number that have been twisted on their bases."

Carlson said an angel figure more than 90 years old was one of the near casualties.

"They twisted it, but despite its age, couldn't get it off," said Carlson. "Manually, we've set up about 100 stones, but some of these weigh in excess of 2,000 pounds."

"Many are in need of professional repairs," said Carlson. "But at some you can't go back, it's not cost effective."

"It is almost like genealogy."

Some of the stones, weighing 200 pounds per cubic foot, were chipped and cracked. Due to their age, they will be difficult to replace.

"By the time we're all done we'll be in excess of \$30,000," said Carlson. "That's including repairs, but

not rebuilding. Some, we'll simply have to right the stones."

"Others, there may be no heirs left. It turns into a spider web. We have an obligation to the owners to fix them (and are trying our best to find them). It's a double-edged sword."

Information sought

Anyone with information on the vandalism, can contact Greater Beloit Area Crime Stoppers at 362-7463 or 36-CRIME.

Up to \$1,400 in cash rewards is being offered for information leading to the arrest of those involved.

Carlson is asking anyone who has relatives interred at the cemetery and has not yet contacted the city, to do so at the Eastlawn Cemetery Head Office at 364-2867.

Cemetery suspects arrested

By Robert Baxter Jr.

Daily News staff writer

Five people were arrested late Monday in connection with more than \$30,000 in damage to headstones and grave monuments at Oakwood Cemetery.

A tip to Beloit's Crime Stoppers program Monday led to the arrests, police said today.

One adult, Daniel C. Trumble, 19, of 817 Harrison Ave., and four juveniles, age 13 to 17, were arrested on charges of felony criminal damage and criminal damage late Monday by Beloit police detectives.

Crime Stoppers police coordinator Det. Vic Hanson said a call to Beloit's program Monday identified six people that may have been involved in the vandalism.

The incidents occurred at the cemetery on July 31.

Hanson said reports on the initial arrests were incomplete, but more information may be available later today.

At this time, it is not known whether more arrests will be made, police said.

Cost estimates for repairing and resetting the more than 160 damaged monuments and headstones at Oakwood Cemetery, will exceed \$30,000, Bob Carlson, superintendent of cemeteries in Beloit, has told the Daily News.

Many of the grave markers dated back to the 1800s, making the monuments some of the oldest in Beloit.

Carlson said he and his staff have spent the better part of the last three weeks repairing and righting the damaged monuments.

In some cases their efforts will be futile because of the age of the monuments.

"In some situations, we simply won't be able to find the owners," Carlson said earlier.

"At that point it will be up to my supervisors whether we fix or simply remove the stones (which we hate to do unless there is no other alternative)."

On July 31, employees arrived at Oakwood Cemetery and found more than 160 grave monuments and headstones tipped over, uprooted and damaged. The damage apparently occurred late Thursday night or early Friday morning, police say.

Monuments several feet tall and weighing nearly a ton were damaged in the incident.

Greater Beloit Area Crime Stoppers offered up to a \$1,000 cash reward for information leading to the arrest of those involved.

Local businessman Troy Shear and Daily News Publisher Bill Behling have also chipped in \$200 each, and several local funeral homes offered reward money as well.

Editorials

Well spoken

3/12/93

Cemetery superintendent had a better idea than the judge for sentencing.

FEW CRIMES are as repugnant as those that dishonor the dead.

Daniel C. Trumble of Beloit was sentenced earlier this week for vandalizing more than 160 grave monuments at Oakwood Cemetery. The damage was estimated at more than \$20,000. Some of the oldest headstones were damaged beyond repair. Nothing more could be done than place the stones in the ground.

For his crimes, Trumble was placed on probation for three years and ordered to spend 60 days in jail with work-release privileges. Further, Judge Edwin Dahlberg told Trumble to get his high school equivalency certificate, find a job and pay restitution of \$10,000.

THE REACTION FROM Bob Carlson, cemetery superintendent, needs no elaboration:

"I've got a lot of trimming to do in the cemetery, weed-pulling and maintenance. A free body would help me and the taxpayers ... He's not going to go in somewhere as a rocket scientist and pull down \$75,000. How long is it going to take to recoup this?"

Exactly right.

Better to have given Trumble an opportunity to work off the \$10,000, by serving the dead and their families.

Cemetery vandal told to 'get a job'

The man who vandalized more than \$20,000 worth of headstones and grave memorials was ordered Tuesday to get a job and make almost \$10,000 in restitution.

Daniel C. Trumble, 19, of 103 1/2 Cleveland Ave., was placed on probation for three years for his role in the July incident at the Oakwood Cemetery, 1221 Clary St. As conditions of his probation, Trumble was ordered to spend 60 days in jail with work-release privileges, get his high school equivalency degree and find a job.

Trumble also must make \$9,975 in restitution.

More than 160 grave monuments and headstones were smashed, tipped over and damaged at Oakwood in late July. Some of the monuments that were destroyed were eight or nine feet tall and weighed as much as 1,000 pounds.

The cost of resetting the headstones and monuments was esti-

mated around \$20,000, but that did not include the cost of repairs.

Bob Carlson, cemetery superintendent, said all of the damaged headstones have been repaired and righted.

"There still are some chips that we could not replace, chips on the sides and things," Carlson said. "Any of them that were cracked in half were adhesed back together and righted."

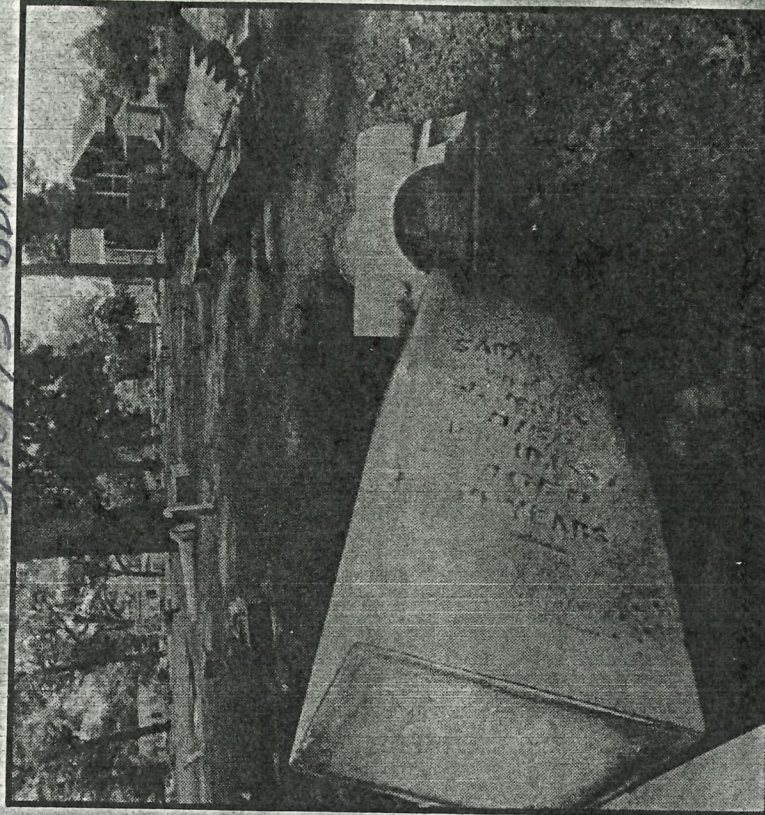
Some of the older headstones that were damaged had to be placed into the ground, Carlson said.

"You can't just make a new stone," Carlson said. "We have to do the best we can."

Carlson said he wished another condition could have been added to Trumble's probation.

"I've got a lot of trimming to do in the cemetery, weed-pulling and maintenance," he said. "A free body would help me and the taxpayers."

Carlson also said he is not optimistic the cemetery will see its res-



Staff photo
File photo shows damage at Oakwood Cemetery.

titution soon if Trumble is being ordered to get his high school equivalency degree and a job.

"He's not going to go in some- where as a rocket scientist and pull down \$75,000," Carlson said. "How long is it going to take to recoup this?"



MILWAUKEE SENTINEL Wednesday, May 5, 1993

BENNY SIEU / Sentinel photographer

Fallen angel: Craig Spoerl (left), superintendent of Calvary Cemetery, and Thomas Richter carry a statue that was vandalized. The face and a

wing of the angel statue were damaged. Richter had hoped to restore the statue, but the damage may be too severe.

Vandals dishonor our dead and our sense of civilization

Even the dead aren't safe these days. No matter what is carved into stone, nobody rests in peace.

Dating back 140 years, Calvary Cemetery is a historic landmark, a beautiful, hilled cemetery of statues, mausoleums, monuments, a Gothic gatehouse, carved stone tree stumps — signifying lives cut short — graves of the earliest settlers and famous families, crypts, massive headstones, and something every cemetery has, vandals, who are brain dead but otherwise quite active.

The sky seemed covered

Janz at large



By WILLIAM JANZ
Sentinel staff writer

with a single dirty cloud stretched tight across the top of budded and blossomed trees, where high-perched, high-pitched cardinals sang. Some

grave markers were darkened by rain. Thomas Richter knelt in the wet grass where a five-foot plaster angel lay, one wing broken, a hole for its face.

"The face was so beautiful," he said. "It had an expression of serenity. Peace. An expression that offered hope. The eyes were magnificent."

For more than 70 years, the angel had stood atop a hill, in a magnificent old chapel where vandals probably came to urinate and rest after their strenuous work. Then, when they had recovered their strength, they

See Janz / 8A

Vandals dishonor our dead and our sense of civilization

Janz

From 1A

bravely smashed in the face of the chapel's guardian, its silent sentinel, Richter called it.

"How can someone take something so beautiful and beat it and smash it?" he asked.

Richter is an American literature teacher by profession, a historian by hobby. He treasures the past so much that he drove a '41 Packard until two years ago. A teacher at Rufus King High School and a member of the board of directors of Friends of Calvary Cemetery, Richter had come to take the angel with him, restore it, reattach the wing, and dress it up the way it used to look. But, until he saw the angel where cemetery workers had placed it in the grass, he didn't

know the face had been battered into pieces.

"I don't know if I can fix this," he said.

Vandalism makes robbing a bank sensible, another member of the Friends' group said. At least, she said, you get something for your effort.

Less than a week after vandals had accomplished their handiwork on a small part of Calvary, the cemetery's headstones were at attention again. Broken pieces of the past had been picked up. Glass from liquor bottles broken on tombstones had been swept up. A crane, and workmen, had lifted the cemetery back into shape.

Craig Spoerl, 47, who is superintendent of the cemetery at 5503 W. Blue Mound Road, knows every stone and tree and bush in the cemetery. The cemetery was his first home, not his last. His father, John, was cemetery superintendent when Craig was born, and Craig grew up there, cutting grass. John Spoerl worked at Calvary for 54 years, and Craig has worked there 23 years.

"I was sick, just sick," he said. "The vandalism almost seemed directed at the priests buried on the hill. (The vandals) never met these people, never knew them, don't know what they have done

for the city of Milwaukee. It's a real shame," he said, and asked a question that is asked over and over when vandals, some stupid, some drunk, some both, destroy what we have left of the last century.

"How could they do this?" he asked.

Cemeteries need friends these days, and this cemetery has its Friends of Calvary, whose members are trying to raise about \$1 million in grants to restore the once fantastic chapel, which is boarded up, and has been ravaged by time and vandals.

In 1903, Father Aegidius Tarasiewicz, pastor of St. Casimir's, was entombed in the chapel, the only remains the chapel holds. The funeral procession showed the respect people had then: it consisted of 146 carriages, and 2,200 pedestrians.

But that was those days; this is these days: what happened at Calvary happens at every cemetery because we don't imprison our dead, don't build high, thick walls with barbed wire on top, and post guards, in towers, with rifles and searchlights, and don't schedule visiting hours one day a week. That would be silly, and that would be a sad comment on civilization.

So we leave the comment to vandals.

City eyes cemetery security

By Robert Baxter Jr.

Daily News staff writer

A local cemetery official wants a more aggressive approach to curb continuing vandalism at city burial sites.

Bob Carlson, Beloit's superintendent of cemetery operations, said there was another wave of vandalism at Oakwood Cemetery over the weekend.

Alarm and lighting systems are being considered, he said, that would utilize infrared lights and silent alarms connected to the police department.

A light would come on, much like a yard light when a resident returns home and drives in their driveway, triggering a response.

"We're managing a department here that is paid for through taxpayer dollars," said Carlson. "We can't continue to pay two or three thousand dollars every month to keep repairing these acts of vandalism."

Carlson said while he doesn't have the money budgeted for alarms, neither does he have the money budgeted to cover the vandalism cost.

"I'd rather take a pro-active stance rather than reactive," he said.

Sometime Saturday night, vandals damaged about 20 headstones at the cemetery, causing some \$2,000 to \$2,500 damage.

It was the third such incident since last fall when more than 160 headstones, many irreplaceable and over a century old, were destroyed.

Cost to replace the headstones and monuments was estimated at \$30,000, which included only stones that could be replaced.

On April 19, more than 40 headstones were vandalized, amounting to several thousand dollars worth of damage.

"We've really been a target lately," said Carlson, who was notified by a city official late Saturday night about the most recent damage.

A 24-hour city watch patrol, on routine patrol, noticed the most recent damage.

"There isn't much the watch patrol can do," said Carlson. "They don't have arrest powers (like po-

Please see VANDALISM P. 2.

Vandalism

Continued from page 1.

lice). And usually they're (vandals) gone before anything can be done."

Carlson said he and his employees had noticed six headstones damaged Friday.

He will first try to convince his superiors about the need for the proposed cemetery security system. The Beloit City Council would be next.

"They look at it as something good, but my first question would be how do we pay for it?" said Everett Haskell, city council president. "I am confident it would help, but there are a lot of things good for the community, that we can't always do. It always comes down to how much it will cost."

Haskell commended Carlson for his enterprising on an issue that affects everyone in the community.

City Council member Vicki Jentoft-Johnson cited another side to the story.

"I would support it," she said. "People that vandalize cemeteries are really pretty low. They have no idea what those sites mean to a family that has lost a loved one. They don't need the burden of the additional loss (through vandalism)."

BELOIT DAILY NEWS, Tuesday, June 22, 1993



Staff photo

Grass, weeds and flowers gone wild await attention by workers using hand-held trimmers.



Staff photo

A vandalized monument, near the gaping hole left when a large tree was uprooted by wind.

A bad season for city's graveyards

THE COMBINED FORCES of vandals, windstorm and municipal neglect have left their unsightly mark on Beloit's two cemeteries, Oakwood and East Lawn.

By no stretch of the imagination are the city's graveyards in scandalously unkempt shape. But they're not well groomed, either.

Bob Carlson knows that, and he feels rotten about it. Carlson feels his small crew has East Lawn in passably good condition. Workers with motorized weed trimmers have begun whipping the tall grass and weeds from around the family monuments and headstones in Oakwood.

BECAUSE MY PARENTS, maternal grandparents and other family members rest in Oakwood, and because some think the glare of publicity can help correct bad situations, I have been prevailed upon to "raise a little hell" about the sorry state of the grounds in Oakwood.

But because I know that Bob Carlson, the city's "superintendent of cemeteries," is not the kind of fellow to countenance sloth, shabby work or unfair criticism, I thought it best to phone him first.

"I know they don't look too good," conceded Carlson when I asked him what I should tell the



Publisher's column

complainers. "It's just been a very bad year. The cemeteries looked pretty nice back on Memorial Day, but it's been downhill from there. The weather has been against us. We had a lot of rain, and we lost a lot of trees and limbs. And vandals have caused us an awful lot of work."

A COUPLE OF BACK-to-back windstorms in July really added to the problem of a help shortage caused mainly by a crimped city budget. City workers who might have been able to help Carlson's crew, instead had to clean up storm damage. Carlson has five full time workers and normally hires some "seasonals," such as students on summer break. Hard-pressed for help, he sent letters to 30 individuals who had applied for work at one time or another. He got three responses. He won't speculate that some of the letters went to people who have no interest in hard work, so long as the welfare checks keep coming. But I

will.

A lot of people who think their burial plots in Oakwood are covered by "perpetual care" clauses, are mistaken, says Carlson. The first graves in Oakwood date back almost 150 years, and many families bought 10-grave plots for \$25 "a long time ago," before the concept of perpetual care. It's only been for about 40 years that the city has sold gravesites with a promise that the plots would be mowed and otherwise kept neat; still Carlson and his crew try their best to care for all of the gravesites as best they can.

BECAUSE OF THE monuments, markers, headstones, vases and other paraphernalia around the graves, it isn't possible to go in with large gang-type mowers and clip the grass. Mowers are used up and down the rows of graves, but removing grass, weeds, vines and debris from around the objects is tedious hand work. He's consider-

ing using chemicals, but realizes that could be controversial.

Carlson's responsibilities ("some people call me the sexton and others say I'm a gravedigger") include caring for both large cemeteries — there are about 10,000 graves in Oakwood — plus Leeson and Strong parks and the Milwaukee Road boulevards.

In case you don't know where Strong Park is, it's the area along the east side of Oakwood, between the cemetery and Milwaukee Road.

ALL-IN-ALL, THAT'S a lot of grass to mow. Not to mention leaves to rake in the fall.

"What am I going to do with all of the leaves this year?" asks Carlson, of nobody in particular. "My superiors stopped us from burning leaves last fall; now it's against city ordinance."

"The city could use the big vacuum it's going to buy, to suck up the leaves in the cemeteries," Carlson mused, "but there'll be a few thousand homeowners who will think their leaves should get vacuumed before they do the cemeteries, and by then it could be a real mess."

AND YOU THINK you have problems.